

General Debate of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Revitalization of the General Assembly
20 February 2018

8 February 2018

Excellency,

Two and half years ago on 11 September 2015, the General Assembly adopted landmark resolution 69/321 and created a much more open, transparent and inclusive process to select the Secretary-General, leading to the appointment of António Guterres. Yet another two and a half years from now, by the end of 2021 - or by 2026 should the current Secretary-General be re-appointed – the Assembly will select the tenth Secretary-General. However, essential features of the greatly improved process for the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General adopted during the 70th and 71st sessions of the General Assembly were not laid down in a subsequent resolution. It is crucial that the major advances achieved should be preserved in a resolution and further strengthened. Moreover, there are a number of outstanding issues that have yet to be addressed.

1 for 7 Billion, the worldwide NGO campaign advocating an open, transparent and inclusive selection process that meets international recruitment standards, believes that this process of consolidation and further improvement should start now. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Revitalization of the General Assembly (AHWG) is committed to continue its thorough consideration of the selection and appointment process of the Secretary-General and of other executive heads, including examining innovative ways to improve them. The forthcoming open and thematic debates in the AHWG on 20 February and 16 April respectively provide an excellent and timely opportunity to do so.

We urge you to consider expressing your support at the forthcoming general debate for:

- **Adopting a resolution that strongly welcomes and specifies all the historic advances achieved during the 70th and 71st sessions for a more open, transparent and inclusive process and confirms their application in future processes to select and appoint the Secretary-General**
- **Confirming that the new more open, inclusive and transparent selection process should apply to a sitting Secretary-General seeking re-appointment**, and exploring how it can best be carried out without having an impact on such a Secretary-General's ability to effectively carry out the office's demanding duties.

We also request you to consider and express support for the following steps that we believe will further improve the selection and appointment process of the Secretary-General:

- **Holding an in-depth debate on the option to appoint the Secretary-General for a longer, single term**, which would enhance her or his independence and capacity for effective action with full accountability to Member States, and without being distracted by efforts for re-election
- Exploring the long-standing proposal that the **Security Council propose multiple candidates** to the General Assembly to choose from
- Reviewing and **clarifying the process of nominating and withdrawing candidacies**, which remained unclear during the latest selection process, including confirming that Member States can put forward candidates who are not their own nationals
- Setting a **deadline for presenting candidates**
- Exploring how to **improve open hearings with candidates** in a better coordinated process that is more interactive, prevents duplication and allows more time for candidates to respond

- Requesting the **Security Council, in choosing its preferred candidate(s), to exercise maximum transparency** including by holding regular meetings with the President of the General Assembly, by providing regular public briefings and by **committing to promptly publish the outcome of straw polls**
- **Updating the Oath of Office** of the Secretary-General to bring it in line with the oath sworn by the President of the General Assembly (which specifically refers to the UN Charter).

Finally, 1 for 7 Billion advocates **merit-based appointments, regardless of nationality, to select the highest qualified candidates for Secretary-General and for all senior appointments**, ensuring equal and fair distribution based on gender and geographical balance. We welcome the substantive progress the Secretary-General has made in addressing gender imbalance in senior appointments. We recall however that paragraph 63 of resolution 71/323 calls for the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity in recruitment of international civil servants and states that, as a general rule **there should be no monopoly on senior posts in the United Nations system by nationals of any State or group of States**. Paragraph 62 stresses that the process of appointments to senior posts should be inclusive and transparent, meeting the standards set out in the Charter.

The Secretary-General should be completely independent in making senior appointments on the basis of merit alone. However, we are concerned that some of the UN's most powerful members in the Security Council have traditionally claimed some senior posts to be consecutively filled by their nationals, a practice that contravenes the letter and spirit of the UN Charter. It also inhibits the Secretary-General from appointing the most highly qualified person to the position. We have recently written to the Secretary-General requesting information about how the resolution's provisions for transparency and inclusivity are being put into effect, whether vacancies for all senior positions are publicly advertised, and whether candidacies for these posts are actively solicited from the wider membership. We requested that such measures should apply to all senior posts including those that some permanent Security Council members have consecutively claimed for their own nationals, two of which come up for appointment before 1 April.

- We urge Assembly members to **closely review the full implementation of the provisions of resolution 71/323 that require observing the highest standards of recruitment to senior posts without the exercise of a monopoly** by a State or group of States.

1 for 7 Billion hopes that these considerations will be helpful in preparing for the forthcoming debates. We will be writing again in advance of the thematic debate on 16 April and stand ready to provide further information.

Yours sincerely,



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On behalf of the 1 for 7 Billion Steering Committee

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